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PP RUEHBC RUEHDE RUEHDIR RUEHKUK
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FM REO HILLAH
TO RUEHC/SECSTATE WASHDC PRIORITY 1108
INFO RUCNRAQ/IRAQ COLLECTIVE
RUCNIRA/IRAN COLLECTIVE
RUEHIHL/REO HILLAH 1175

C O N F I D E N T I A L HILLAH 000076

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E.O. 12958: DECL: 9/5/2018
TAGS: [PGOV](#) [PINR](#) [IZ](#)
SUBJECT: BABIL PROVINCIAL COUNCIL LIFTS PRT BOYCOTT: FROM SHUNNING TO
EMBRACE (MAYBE)

CLASSIFIED BY: Kenneth Hillas, PRT Leader, Babil PRT, Dept of
State.
REASON: 1.4 (b), (d)

1 (C) In a September 4 special session, the Babil Provincial Council (PC) decided to lift its boycott of the PRT after CF had advised Governor Salim two days earlier that former Iraqi detainee Ahmed Zaki was being returned to Iraqi custody. (Note: Ahmed Zaki, who had been awaiting trial on multiple murder charges from 2006, is a Sunni from North Babil and his victims were Shia.) At the PC's invitation, the PRT Leader addressed the Council, emphasizing that this case had been resolved in accordance with Iraqi law through discussions with Babil Chief Judge Thamir and High Judicial Council Chair Judge Medhat. Lavishing praise on the PRT in an effort to restore PRT-PC good relations, Chairman Mohammed Al Massoudi expressed satisfaction with the news. Several speakers, including Deputy PC Chair (and Dawa Deputy Party Chair) Dr. Ne'ama and Murtada Kamil (Sadrist Trend and a recent IVLP selectee) and others, echoed the PC Chair's remarks and stressed the importance of restoring PRT-PC cooperation.

12. (C) The PC did not actually vote, but there were no dissenting voices to Chairman Mohammed, who three times pronounced that the boycott was to be lifted. In the course of the PC session, Governor Salim arrived, bringing his own media retinue and armed bodyguards into the PC Chambers (the latter for the first time). In contrast to all other interventions by PC members, Governor Salim and Badr Deputy Chief Hassan Al-Hamza largely skipped over the Zaki case and leveled continued criticism of CF. Without providing specifics, the Governor accused the CF of actions that were having a "negative impact." It was Hassan Al-hamza, however, who launched into a diatribe about CF raids in the sub-district of Qassem, which he asserted had targeted political offices and which he termed illegal. Throwing fuel on the fire, he alleged that one such raid "almost" entered a holy shrine in Qassem. In a demonstration of his real power, Hassan Al-Hamza waved off the PC Chair's efforts to cut him off, concluding that the Ahmed Zaki case represented a "serious breach of Iraqi law." He also suggested that there continues to be an underlying problem.

13. (SBU) In subsequent media interviews in the Council Chambers with Al-Furat TV, Al- Iraqiya TV, and Al-Masar TV, the PRT Leader emphasized the important role of the Iraqi judiciary and the US commitment to resolving, in accordance with Iraqi law, questions related to the handling of detainees. At the end of his own interview with Al-Masar, Governor Salim brought the PRT Leader before the camera and proceeded to scold him that the US "should not defend or support one side of the people and neglect the rest of the society" -- a clear effort to exploit Shia/Sunni divisions. The Governor quickly broke off the interview and departed when the PRT Leader began to praise the Governor's cooperation with Coalition, confirming suspicions that he views such expressions as the political kiss of death. Leapfrogging from shunning to embrace, the PC Chair Mohammed had a list of PC

Committee Chairs provided to the PRT along with the request for them to have weekly meetings with their PRT counterparts..

SIGNATURE